

Oral History Program: Biographical Notes

Nigel LOVELL (1916 -)

Actor

- Birth & Family:** Born in Cremorne, Sydney, on 27 January 1916.
- Education:** Kindergarten at Cremorne Girls Grammar; Primary Schools in Mosman and Neutral Bay; secondary schooling at Sydney Church of England Grammar School (Shore) where he sat for the Leaving Certificate twice due to illness.
- Qualifications:** Arts/Law degree, Sydney University.
- Memberships:**
- Awards:**
- Work History:** Lovell's interest in acting began at the age of 19 when, as an Arts/Law student at Sydney University, he and his friends attended auditions for the Dramatic Society's production of *As You Like It*, in which he won the role of Old Adam. Appearances in a number of lunch hour plays at the University Union followed, and the next year he played in their production of *Don Juan*.
- After graduating from University, Lovell became an Articled Clerk for the law firm, Sly & Russell. About this time he became involved in repertory theatre and he and his friends put on regular shows in a large hall at Gould's Private Hotel, George Street, Sydney. Offers of radio work followed, and Lovell was offered a part in a 'soap opera' being made by AWA consisting of five half-hourly episodes a week, at a salary of £12 per week.
- Disillusioned with law, Lovell decided to become a professional actor and although his parents weren't happy about it, they were supportive and did not discourage him.
- Lovell then played Romeo in a radio play for the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC). As the ABC was a national organisation and all their productions were "live-to-air", the play had to be performed twice due to time differences: once for Eastern states and once for the West.
- Lovell then became involved in the Lux Radio Theatre, appearing in a radio adaptation of the film *Hands Across The Table*; this was commercial radio, broadcast "live-to-air" every Sunday evening at 8pm.
- Australian films were also being produced, and Lovell believes his first film appearance was in *Eureka Stockade* with Chips Rafferty, followed by [Nino Culotta's] (*I think it is Carlotta – but I'm not sure*) *They're A Weird Mob*, however his main source of income was radio and theatre, and later, television - which in its early days was "live-to-air", a stressful experience.
- In 1951-52 Lovell received a Travelling Scholarship which enabled him to go to England to study production; while there, he saw television for the first time.

While at the ABC, Lovell was involved in a very popular Australian historical series, appearing in *Stormy Petrel* (about Captain Bligh), *The Hungry Ones* (about Sydney's first years), *Dr Redfern* starring Ron Haddrick, and another in which Lovell played the role of Captain Johnson of the NSW Corps (for whom Johnson Street, Annandale, is named).

Around this time Lovell was offered producing and/or directing opportunities by radio station 2GB, directing several of their Sunday night Macquarie Theatre productions, one of which was *Night Must Fall*.

Lovell's previous experience in this area occurred before he went to London when he was asked to direct an opera, Verdi's *Masked Ball*, for a new opera company founded by Mrs Clarice Lorenz, wife of C T Lorenz. The performers included a newcomer, later known as June Bronhill. This production received good notices and was performed at the Tivoli Theatre in Sydney. Lovell found it a great challenge, as his only experience before this had been directing small plays.

Lovell never regretted his decision to become an actor, nor did he ever wish to return to law, although the industrial disputes of the 1950's made him aware of the need for industrial law.

Prepared by Jill Willis, January 2004 from oral history interview conducted by ??? on 26.5.1998.